



MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY WORKGROUP (MTAC)

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: November 3, 2021

9-11 a.m.

Welcome – Roll Call

PRESENT FOR THE MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL:

- Bob Wilson, Chairperson
- Kenneth Hopper, Vice Chairperson
- Michael Maves
- Mark Losey
- Jessi Adler
- Jason Aric Jones
- Jenny Cook
- Richard Williamson (absent)
- Donald Kauppi
- ETS (vacant)

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DEPARTMENT) STAFF

- Kristen Bennett, Jessica Holley, Annalisa Centofanti, Ron Yesney, Dakota Hewlett, Greg Kinser, Nikki Van Bloem, Paul Gaberdiel, Rob Katona, Jill Sell, Roger Storm, Josiah Killingbeck (DNR/LED), Doug Rich, Don Poppe (WLD)

OTHERS: Elizabeth Perry (MSU), Debra Alfonso (MDOT), Andrea LaFontaine, Dug Jordan, Joe Kuchnicki, Karen Bahrman, Karen Middendorp, Karl Davenport, Robert Allen, Amy Scharmen-Burgdolf, Kristen Thrall (USFS)

Meeting minutes

Meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Bob Wilson, MTAC Chairperson, opened the meeting with a statement. Starting with thanking the DNR staff, council members, and general public for attending and making these meetings happen. Also, would like to thank the Department for all the trail projects over the course of this year. Bob is proud of the work that has been done this year, working with the Department on a master trail plan that will guide development of our trails over the next years. Bob is proud of the work in making significant recommendations to the Department on funding for non-motorized trails. Bob is happy to have been highlighting members of the public as trail champions and making a serious effort to include more general public input with hopes to see more of that to come. Part of the responsibility of this council is to serve as the general liaison to pass along ideas and issues from the public to the DNR and Governor's office. Recently, Bob had an opportunity to be a guest speaker at the Michigan Horse Council equine legislative day in Lansing and where he addressed a crowd of trail users, and one great thing that came from the general public that day was the ability to pass along ideas to the trail council. Bob said the council will continue to focus on ways to improve the public outreach. Bob mentioned he is hoping for an opportunity next year to gather in at least one or two instances with in-person meetings. Bob feels there is more to be gained from meeting in person, and he is excited for next year. Once again, Bob would like to thank you council members for your dedication and passion for trails.

Motion was made to approve the draft meeting minutes from July 29, 2021. Mark Losey and Ken Hopper were first and second to approve, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made to approve the Nov. 3, 2021 agenda as is. Mike Maves and Jenny Cook were first and second to approve, with all in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT - none

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

RESOLUTION #11 | OPEN MEETING ACT (OMA) VOTE

(see attached)

Bob Wilson explained resolution #11 is to drop the language in the council by-laws referencing OMA in order to preserve the flexibility to have an option of meeting virtually. Motion was made to adopt resolution #11 with Jessi Adler and Ken Hopper first and second to approve, and all in favor. Motion carried.

TRAIL CHAMPIONS

Paul Heinz (Resolution #12)

Paul Heinz was nominated by Jenny Cook to be recognized as a trail champion (see attached). Motion was made to approve resolution #12. Bob Wilson and Jenny Cook approved, with all in favor. Motion carried.

Mark Losey asked the council if these champions are being recognized with a plaque or certificate? Bob Wilson said not at this time but said this is a great idea. Bob Wilson asked Mark to follow up with Kristen Bennett to see if there is a way to fund this idea. Mark said we should list the trail champions over the various years, like a hall of fame and make it web based. Mark and Jenny Cook will work on an expanded recognition program. Rich Williams said another idea is to add trail champion signage at staging areas for those individuals. Bob said this is a good first step.

Josiah Killingbeck (Resolution #13)

Josiah Killingbeck, DNR Law Enforcement, was nominated by Bob Wilson as a trail champion (see attached). Motion was made to approve resolution #13. Jason Jones and Don Kauppi approved, with all in favor. Motion carried.

REGIONAL TRAIL SHED MANAGEMENT

Mark Losey/Bob Wilson

Bob Wilson said he is in support of the idea of a regional trail shed management to get user groups to work together. Mark Losey said in our role as a council, we can bring organizations together to talk about use of state land. We are all going after a piece of real estate and want to make sure it is safe for everyone to use, that they are informed, and being respectful to others. Regional contacts can be leveraged across all the advisory trail workgroups, let's sit together and devise a conversation with these workgroups at one time. Jenny Cook mentioned if we knew each other's events with a calendar or schedule that crosses over users, maybe according to each region, then we would know ahead of time where our users are going to be at and know where other users will be utilizing trails. Jason Aric Jones said this is a fantastic idea. Jason pointed out that every affiliate and sub affiliates work in a vacuum, and it is hard to keep track of what local groups are doing in the state. Not knowing what other user groups are organizing can create chaotic situations. We can all get on the same page and figure out a strategy. Jason stated we have to look at this as growing the whole pie, not taking a bigger slice. Bob Wilson likes this concept, and the master trail plan is premise to this approach. Bob thinks it would be great to log all the information in some sort of clearing house. Bob said he will take on a way to frame in this idea with a clearing house. Jenny Cook mentioned equestrians developed a Michigan horseback riding event calendar, horse trails, horse camping, etiquette, and horse friends groups listed by regions throughout Michigan on the Michigan Horse Trails Directory <http://michiganhorsetrails.com/>. Mark Losey remarked that is where the gap is, other user communities do not publish events/activities.

ALLEGAN STATE GAME PROPOSAL

Robert Allen

Robert Allen, Allegan County, stated that there has been a proposal submitted to the DNR to create a Natural Surface Single Track Trail Loop located in the Allegan State Game area. Jason Aric Jones mentioned he has been working with Robert on this proposal and there is push back from DNR Wildlife. Robert said the proposal is supported by the local community and the county. Kristen Bennett, DNR, said the Allegan State Game area is managed by the DNR Wildlife

division. Kristen said the proposal details are deferred to that agency to evaluate and review to see how it fits in with their land management. Don Poppe, DNR Wildlife (WLD), has discussed with Robert this particular proposal and WLD did issue a land use permit. The permit allows the use of hand tools to fix safety issues but at this time are not allowing heavy equipment. Don said the primary intended use for the land is hunting and wildlife. Don added the funding source of the wildlife restoration act comes into play here and recreational use creates conflict with that. As far as any major reroutes that is a larger picture within the division and out of his scope. Bob Wilson stated he has seen an evolution in some state game areas around the state where bikes are being permitted, with other kinds of recreational activity on these lands. Robert asked Don what the time frame will be for Allegan County to see answers. Don replied saying he is not sure on time frame. Don cited that the land use rules for state game areas does not allow wheeled vehicles, which includes bikes as well. Don added that Pitman Robertson funding plays into this. Bob Wilson asked if it would take a land use change to make a transition. Jason Aric Jones said there is ongoing dialogue with WLD in regard to these changes. Jason added there are areas all over this country where Pitman Robertson funds lands where bikes and other user trails are on them, there may be a misconception within WLD. As more people are interested in trail recreations there needs to be a recognition within WLD. Jason would like to see the Department answer Robert's proposal. We should not be turning down stewardship requests to maintain trails. Don Poppe remarked that WLD has issued a permit to Robert's group allowing them to maintain the trails. Robert did say his group has been removing dead fall and improving the trails. Elizabeth Perry, MSU, mentioned she is working with the Department on expanding trails use in this area. Don Poppe said WLD has discussed some things with Rob, and there will be a formal response coming soon. Jill Sell, DNR, asked Robert if he is aware of a DNR lease with the city of Allegan? The lease intent is to develop a natural surface single track trail, and no one has moved on this option. Robert replied he is aware of the lease and there are limitations. The land is set in a ravine and is washing away. Robert cannot believe that piece of land was leased, it is not feasible for trail recreation. Bob Wilson stated he will bring this topic back to the agenda next year.

MICHIGAN COMMUNITIES | ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

Bob Wilson

Bob Wilson said the Upper Peninsula (UP) is a wonderful place to go, and people go there for quality of life to enjoy trails. There is a lack of infrastructure which plays into the ability to reside there. When we look at new federal funding coming into Michigan and the opportunity to expand infrastructure, we should take a look at the UP for these improvements. Adding charging stations is an opportunity to attract users. Ken Hopper recommended if we approach this topic, to rope in Brad Garmon, who is working on initiatives for the UP. Ken mentioned that sometimes growth is not the best thing, but the UP is a great recreational area for the state. As we see more people working from home, growth may happen. Jason Aric Jones remarked that there is a focus on creating trails where people are, not to be construed with where people live. There are struggles dealing with more people coming up to the UP to recreate, Jason referenced the land opportunity in Keweenaw County. We need to look at some of the impact studies on rural communities. Kristen Bennett, said the Department needs to think of this growth as a balancing act, being able

to manage the lands, recreation, and yet provide quality. When the Department is cautious, it is because we take into consideration resources, managing lands, and to not over burden rural infrastructure, it is not as simple as it sounds. Bob Wilson mentioned the value that comes from MTAC is to act as a liaison between the general public and the Department, considering the revolving need for change in the UP. There is a sense for more recreational opportunities in the UP. Jason Aric Jones says there needs to be a general reconciliation within the Department, and the evolution of the public over the past years are wanting more trail sports. Jason mentioned there is an interest in utilizing hunting and state game areas, as Jason commented the hunting recreation is declining and trail recreation is increasing. Bob Wilson mentioned several years ago the Outdoor Advisory reported that the number one use in Michigan are trails. Bob said he will bring this topic into every MTAC meeting . Mike Maves remarked as we talk about traveling north, some people go to the UP to get away and do not want the crowds, which is part of the pleasure of being in the UP.

MSU TRAIL POLICY AND LAW COURSE

Bob Wilson

Bob Wilson announced that he is working with Mark Losey to get an abbreviated version of this college course out to community schools within the state, starting with Romeo public schools. The hopes are to raise a new generation of trail advocates. Mark Losey said they are targeting high schools and the younger generation providing knowledge maintaining and sustaining trails. Bob said he will be happy to share information with any schools. Mark added there are so many other career opportunities that can spawn off of this information, like conservation officer.

TRAILS ARE COMMON GROUND

Jason Aric Jones

Jason Aric Jones provided information about Trails Are Common Ground campaign. The concept is Respectful, Inclusive, Safe, Enjoyable (RISE) trails. This is an effort that evolved post COVID. Many organizations have signed on to this campaign. The tenants are advocating for the best possible trail experience. Jason encourages all affiliates to sign on with this program and get the word out there. Kristen Bennett said this is an excellent program and the DNR may be working with it in the future. Jenny Cook said she would like to work with the organization to highlight more about the "speaking" when encountering horses, she feels it is not given enough attention.

<https://trailsarecommonground.org/>

UPDATES

EQUINE TRAIL SUBCOMMITTEE (ETS)

(see attached report)

Jenny Cook mentioned it is okay for people to be afraid or nervous when you see a horse. However, this reaction will increase your heart rate and the horse can pick up on that and may see you as a predator. Jenny recommends talking to the horse back rider, as this will work to reduce your heart rate and make both you and the horse at ease.

NONMOTORIZED ADVISORY WORKGROUP (NAW)

Ken Hopper

Ken outlined some of the highlights from the most recent NAW meeting.

- Ebike signage and the affect moral persuasion has in signage placement.
- MATAG conference was held virtual Aug. 17 and received well.
- ARP funds, the DNR is working on a project list with a focus on nonmotorized trails.
- Iron Belle Trail (IBT) is at 71% of completion.

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (SAW)

(see attached report)

OFF ROAD VEHICLE ADVISORY WORKGROUP (ORVAW)

Jessi Adler

(see attached report)

Jessi Adler did report that the hot topic is the HB4535 bill that passed house and an ORVAW sub-group has been formed to reach out to the bill sponsor with hopes of rewriting the language in the bill for more clarity. Karen Middendorp was asked by Bob Wilson if the snow community supports the language changes of this bill. Karen replied and said the snow and ORV communities has not discussed this.

TRAILS WEEK UPDATE

Dakota Hewlett, DNR

Dakota Hewlett reported on the outcome of Trails Week this past September. Dakota said the is the second time it has been held virtually. The participation was lower this year, may be due to rain that week. Overall, there was 27,790 miles logged this year. Donations for trail projects raised \$6,468 and a lot of photos were submitted.

Bob Wilson asked if Phase II of Mobile Cause will be moving forward in the Spring? Kristen Bennet replied yes, that is still on track. Bob stated he will put the mobile cause on the next 2022 MTAC agenda.

RTP ADVISORY BOARD

Dakota Hewlett, DNR

Dakota Hewlett said part of the federal money nonmotorized trails receive are through Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Federal Hwy. One of the requirements each year is to hold an advisory meeting and discuss projects. The DNR would like to transition some of this obligation to MTAC and have them host the meeting each year, discussing the trail projects. Bob Wilson said the council will take responsibility and he is looking forward to this.

DNR REGIONAL STAFF REPORTS

(see attached report)

MTAC TRAIL SUMMIT

Bob Wilson

Bob Wilson said in 2022 MTAC would like to coordinate a trail summit. The focus is to make a direct connection with legislature. Bob said this concept will be building off the equine legislative day that has been held each year in September. Bob hopes to bring more of the public to MTAC meetings. Jenny Cook mentioned the equine legislative day will be Sept 21, 2022 with more details to follow.

2022 MEETINGS

Annalisa Centofanti, DNR, will provide 2022 dates soon to the council members.

CLOSING/ROUND ROBIN

Ken Hopper circled back around to the clearing house idea and stated that coordinating efforts between the DNR, Pure Michigan, and Visitor and Conventions Bureau to broadcast events and recreational opportunities will make the most sense. Ken will work with Mark Losey on this concept.

Ken Hopper announced that Paul Gaberdiel, DNR Trail Specialist, will be retiring on Nov. 12 and that it has been a pleasure working with him over the years.

Jessi Adler mentioned that this may be her last meeting as her term is expiring in January. This has been a great couple of years and has been exciting working with this group. Jessi would like to renew her term.

Jenny Cook said it has been an honor to serve on MTAC and would like to renew her term.

Jason Aric Jones thanked the DNR field staff, saying a month ago Kristen Bennett assisted in the (WIP) process, helping to submit proposals for projects within state parks on natural surface single track trails to be considered for funding. Jason said we now have quite a few whips that were submitted.

Bob Wilson told the council members they will be receiving a meeting notice from the DNR in early Jan. for a strategic meeting. Bob thanked the DNR for being the best trails state in the country.

Meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

MTAC Resolution 2021-11

Resolution to Amend the Rules of Procedure for Michigan Department of Natural Resources Michigan Trails Advisory Council and Advisory Workgroups

WHEREAS, the MTAC Committee has conducted a comprehensive review of the Rules of Procedures to determine whether any existing provisions should be updated or revised.

WHEREAS, the MTAC Committee has indicated below the issues it considered and the changes it recommends; (remove reference to Open Meetings Act)

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the MTAC Committee hereby approves the revision of Section 1 of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Rules of Procedure for the Michigan Trails Advisory Council and advisory workgroups as shown below

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the revised version be published and submitted to the advisory workgroups

Section 1: Regular Meetings – Original Version

Regular meetings of the Council may be held quarterly, or as needed, for the transaction of business as may be brought before the Council. Business that the Council may perform shall be conducted at a public meeting of the committee held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.261 to 15.275.

Section 1: Regular Meetings – Revised Version

Regular meetings of the Council may be held quarterly, or as needed, for the transaction of business as may be brought before the Council. Business that the Council may perform shall be conducted at a public meeting of the committee.

MTAC Resolution #12-2021

TRAIL CHAMPION – PAUL HEINZ

(Jenny Cook)

The equestrian community of Michigan would like to highlight Paul Heinz as one of Michigan's 2021 Trails Champions. Paul has a lifetime of experience in Forestry Management and horse ownership. Paul, his wife Janet, and son Burt, bring their experience and energy to maintain horse trails in Allegan County. Paul and his family have lived in Michigan since 1980. In November 1992, they moved to a house 1/2 mile from the Allegan horse trails system. They understand the need for safe horse trails for horseback riders. Most of the tools that they use are from previous generations passed down to them. They have also incorporated and added new tools to their collection as needed. Often Paul and Burt go out the day before a workday to remove obstacles and prepare the worksite. Janet makes various horse trail signs like "Caution Trail Work Ahead" that are placed along the trails when trail work is in process. Paul and Burt pull out stumps, take down "fall over" angled trees over the trails, widen trails, and really anything that is needed. They have the knowledge, tools, equipment, desire, and dedication to get the job done. Bugs don't slow them down; they wear insect repellent and nets over their arms and face. The contributions the Heinz family gives to our horse trails is truly remarkable. We are delighted to honor Paul Heinz with the Michigan 2021 Trails Champion recognition.

Please join us at our Michigan Trails Advisory Council meeting Wednesday, November 3, 2021 from 9am-11am to be recognized as a Michigan Trails Champion.

The Michigan DNR will send an additional email meeting invite. The meeting is not an in-person meeting, only online (virtual).

Thank you again for all of your family's extraordinary efforts in Allegan County for the equestrian community. If more people were as wonderful as you, what a beautiful world this would be. You are an encouragement to so many.

Best regards,

Jenny Cook

Michigan Equine Trails Representative (MTAC)

SW Michigan Equine Trails Representative (ETS)

mi.trail.rep@gmail.com

(269)998-5916

DNR LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

The Michigan Trails Advisory Council would like to recognize and commend the work of the DNR's Law Enforcement division in helping to promote safe and law-abiding use of our trails and the states natural resources. In addition, people like Officer Killingbeck need to be recognized for the selfless and dedicated commitment they have to ensuring that all of us can enjoy the great outdoors in a safe setting. Many conservation officers personally risk their safety to help others, and Michiganders need to recognize the important role they perform in enforcing the laws of the state.

Therefore, the Michigan Trails Advisory Council recognizes and commends the continued superior performance of the conservation officers and the entire DNR Law Enforcement Division.

Reference: Detroit News Article Aug. 5, 2021

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2021/08/05/dnr-conservation-officer-rescues-injured-man-northern-michigan/5506272001/>



DNR PARKS AND RECREATION TRAILS DIVISION ADVISORY BOARD WORKGROUPS

MICHIGAN TRAILS ADVISORY COUNCIL	MTAC				Term
	BOB WILSON (CHAIR)	Chair Nonmotorized	517-896-9443	mitrail1955@gmail.com	March 13, 2020 Governor's Discretion
	Vacant	Snowmobile			January 17, 2020 January 16, 2024
	MARK LOSEY	Snowmobile	124-882-1982	mark.losey@dteenergy.com	March 26, 2021 January 17, 2025
	MICHAEL MAVES	ORV	231-420-6502	231-420-6502	March 26, 2021 January 17, 2025
	JESSI ADLER	ORV	517-230-9923	jessicawortley@gmail.com	December 14, 2018 January 17, 2022
	JENNY COOK	Equine	269-998-5916	cooknjenny@hotmail.com	December 14, 2018 January 17, 2022
	KENNETH HOPPER	Non-motorized	906-440-0991	kjhopper75@gmail.com	March 13, 2020 January 17, 2024
	DONALD KAUPPI	ORV owners and residents of the Upper Peninsula	906-369-7129	marinernorthch@gmail.com	March 13, 2020 January 17, 2023
	JASON JONES	Non-motorized	734-604-2750	jasonaricjones@gmail.com	March 26, 2021 January 17, 2025
	RICHARD WILLIAMSON	Trails Support Maintenance & Growth	248-866-8750	rich.williamson@hammer9.com	March 13, 2020 January 17, 2024
	Vacant	Equine			March 26, 2021 January 17, 2025

The Detroit News

MICHIGAN

Determined DNR conservation officer rescues man in northern Michigan

The Detroit News

Published 8:13 p.m. ET Aug. 5, 2021 | Updated 9:29 p.m. ET Aug. 5, 2021

A Michigan Department of Natural Resources conservation officer is back in the spotlight for his heroic efforts are helping rescue an injured 75-year-old man this week in Mason County.

Dispatchers in nearby Lake County received a 911 emergency call around 8:30 p.m. Tuesday from a man who said he had fallen and broken his back, but the call was lost due to poor reception and dispatchers couldn't pinpoint a location, the department said in a statement Thursday.

Sheriff's deputies tried to find out whose phone number it was. DNR Conservation Officer Josiah Killingbeck, who was on patrol, heard about the distress call and after consulting other officers, learned the number belonged to a Hudsonville resident, according to the release.

The man's son told police he had gone in a truck to the Whiskey Creek area, southeast of Ludington in Mason County, to prepare tree stands for the upcoming deer hunting season, and his truck should be parked alongside the road, the department said.

"Whether you are hunting, hiking or trail riding you should always share your plans with a family member or friend," said Lt. Joe Molnar of the DNR Law Enforcement Division.

"In the plan, you should list where you are going to be and when you expect to return. You should also include any alternate locations you may be at, in case weather or other conditions change your plans. Sharing this information could be the difference between life and death if you are injured and cannot call for help."

At the area, Killingbeck spied tire tracks on a two-track road heading east, which he followed to an unmarked path and found a red GMC pickup at 9:39 p.m., state officials said.

Since the GPS system in Killingbeck's truck was not showing area road names and he had no cellphone service, "I had Report All Poaching dispatch take the GPS coordinates from my radio and give them to Mason Dispatch to assist in getting other resources into the area," the officer said.

Through a search nearby, Killingbeck found a faint walking path headed north, then footprints on a dirt bike trail.

Killingbeck called out for the man through the woods but heard nothing until about 50 yards near a large oak tree, where the officer found him weakly responding, lying on his side at about 9:53 p.m., nearly 11 hours since he had fallen. A tree stand was on the ground above his head.

"The man told Killingbeck he was about 30 feet above the ground attempting to get the tree stand out of the oak, when he grabbed a dead branch and fell," the DNR said. "He told Killingbeck he could not call for help sooner because he did not have cellphone service."

Killingbeck tended to the man until emergency personnel arrived and he was carried out at 11:30 p.m. on a backboard, complaining of pain in his lower back, buttocks and right shoulder, leg and knee. The man was airlifted to a trauma center for treatment.

It was not the first time Killingbeck has been cited for his heroics.

In 2017, he was one of two conservation officers the DNR honored with its Lifesaving Award.

That June, the Luther native helped a mother and daughter after their family's canoe overturned along the Pere Marquette River in Lake County, the department reported.

New Trail Policy and Law course gives students a toolkit to advocate in their own communities


[Amanda Sorensen](#) - September 8, 2021

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Community Sustainability class led by Bob Wilson provides a ‘how-to’ and empowers students to be leaders in outdoor recreation development.



Improving access to nature and the outdoors is an admirable goal for any community. Figuring out how to make that happen- from finding funding to addressing bureaucratic red-tape, planning and zoning issues, among the many other things one needs to do- can be daunting. One new class, Trail Policy and Law (CSUS491), in the MSU Department of Community Sustainability, is providing students with the tools to overcome policy and planning barriers to empower students to lead and influence trail and outdoor recreation management in their communities.

Bob Wilson, instructor of the Trail Policy and Law course, brings his wealth of experience on outdoor recreation policy and development, making this a unique opportunity for students to learn the process and insider-secrets from one of Michigan's leaders in trails.

Wilson has experience engaging with trail and outdoor recreation issues from multiple vantage points. He has a long legacy of public service, working for 28 years as the Senior Counsel to the Michigan Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, Outdoor Recreation Committees. During his time in public service, Wilson worked on the development of the Michigan Trailways Act, the Great Lakes Compact, and the Recreation Passport program.

After his time in public policy, he served as the Executive Director of the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance. In this role Wilson guided the opening of the Great Lake to Lake Trails Route #1, the state's longest destination trail. His notable work in both the public and private spheres led to him being appointed by the Governor Whitmer as the Chair of the Michigan Trails Advisory Council.

When asked what inspired him to create this course, Wilson says, "I realized that there was no one specific source of information to turn to help a new generation of trail leaders in Michigan. There is a great story to tell about how Michigan trails have developed over the years and why Michigan is the nation's leader in trail mileage. It's also a subject that's near and dear to my heart as I helped to write much of the foundational legislation in Michigan statute dealing with trails."



Bob Wilson, instructor in CSUS and of Trail Policy and Law course featured in this story



Opening day of the Great Lake to Lake Trail between South Haven (pictured here) and Port Huron.
Photo Credit: Bob Wilson

Trail Policy and Law was developed with support from long-time Michigan trails philanthropist, Mike Levine. Levine has a special connection to trails in Michigan, as he is legally blind and uses the trails both as a means of transportation around his community and opportunity to recreate outdoors safely.

John Calvert, Levine’s colleague and fellow trail advocate, says of Levine’s impact on trail development, “One of the big things that Mike is responsible for is changing culture in government institutions. In the past it had taken 10-15 years to complete a trail project. With Mike’s investments and his insight, we were able to make changes within a few years so people can really start enjoying these trails much sooner.”

Levine, discussing why he supported Wilson in creating this class, said, “This is for those who care to get things done, it’s a ‘how-to’ and empowering the people who are doing it. Bob has led the winning strategy in trails development and has the ability to bring in resources and the folks who make things happen. Bob has also ridden the entire trail network and is intimately involved in all aspects of the trail network.”

Trail Policy and Law will involve and engage trail leaders from around Michigan and the people who understand the historical, conservation, and social value our trails create and provide firsthand experiences of how trails have helped to shape the state and communities in the state. For example, one of the planned guest speakers is a key trail leader in southern Michigan who is exploring the history of the Underground Railroad as it paralleled one of the state's largest trails.

Wilson notes that this course is timely because, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, every community in Michigan is looking at trails, whether they be land or water-based trails, to help improve quality of life and connectivity within their communities. Community leaders need people to turn to, to direct them, and help them develop trails that are consistent statewide. In this course, students learn the formula to follow to make trail projects happen, from funding, to policy, to proposals, to working with collaborators and partners.

Reflecting on what he hopes students will come away with after this course, Wilson says, "I hope to be able to instill a source of pride and leadership and help support a new generation of trail leaders that can take Michigan to a higher level of trail development and trail policy. Trails are an important way to connect communities and people and an important land-use and conservation tool. From my experience there is significant interest from our students in helping to create this connectivity between people and conserving Michigan's natural resources through these sort of passive-use conservation tools."

A section of this course will be held in the Fall 2022 semester.

Interested in learning more about some of Wilson's work on trails in Michigan?

Check out the [Great Lake to Lake Trails Project](#), aired earlier this year on PBS and local Michigan broadcasting.

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Public Interest

Upper Peninsula population loss should be wake-up call, business leader says

Published: Aug. 15, 2021, 8:00 a.m.



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By [Taylor DesOrmeau | tdesorme@mlive.com](#)

While Michigan's Lower Peninsula added more than 200,000 new residents between 2010 and 2020, the Upper Peninsula lost nearly 10,000 people, per new U.S. Census data.

It's not a surprise to [InvestUP](#) CEO Marty Fittante, but it is concerning.

"That trend needs to serve to motivate us," Fittante said. "It's not sustainable. It's something we need to find a course correction for to have any chance to thrive."

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InvestUP is an economic organization representing Upper Peninsula business.

RELATED: Michigan is more diverse, west side sees population surge and more takeaways from 2020 Census data



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Rural counties struggled the most to maintain their population, and the U.P. was no different. Of the six Michigan counties that lost the largest percentage of their residents, five are north of the Mackinac Bridge.

The U.P. now represents less than 3% of Michigan's total population, per the new census data.

Of the U.P.'s 15 counties, 14 of them shrunk between 2010 and 2020, per the census. Only Houghton County (up 733 residents) gained residents.

2020 Census: Michigan ...

2010-2020: % change in population

LOSS

GAIN



Map by [Scott Levin](#) | slevin@mlive.com



(Can't see the map? [Click here.](#))

Gogebic lost the most, dropping 2,047 residents. The 2018 closure of the Ojibway Correctional Facility in Marenisco Township likely played a role, Fittante said. The prison employed about 200 workers and could accommodate nearly 1,200 prisoners. In Michigan, inmates get counted in the county they're incarcerated in.

Per the census, Marenisco's population dropped from 1,727 in 2010 to 455 in 2020. The 73.7% reduction in people was the biggest drop of any Michigan community.

Gogebic, Michigan's westernmost county, did see some rebound when [Waupaca Foundry](#) opened a facility in Ironwood and hired 45 workers.

2020 US Census: Michigan cities population change

Search a city, township or county in the window below.

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City / Twp.	County	2020 pop.	2010 pop.	% change
Detroit city	Wayne	639,111	713,777	-10.5%
Grand Rapids city	Kent	198,917	188,040	5.8%
Warren city	Macomb	139,387	134,056	4.0%
Sterling Heights city	Macomb	134,346	129,699	3.6%
Ann Arbor city	Washtenaw	123,851	113,934	8.7%
Dearborn city	Wayne	109,976	98,153	12.0%
Lansing city	Ingham	112,644	114,297	-1.8%
Clinton charter township	Macomb	100,513	96,796	3.8%
Canton charter township	Wayne	98,659	90,173	9.4%
Livonia city	Wayne	95,535	96,942	-1.5%
Macomb township	Macomb	91,663	79,580	15.2%
Troy city	Oakland	87,294	80,980	7.8%
Westland city	Wayne	85,420	84,094	1.6%
Farmington Hills city	Oakland	83,986	79,740	5.3%
Flint city	Genesee	81,252	102,434	-20.7%
Shelby charter township	Macomb	79,408	73,804	7.6%
Southfield city	Oakland	76,618	71,739	6.8%
Wyoming city	Kent	76,501	72,125	6.1%
Rochester Hills city	Oakland	76,300	70,995	7.5%
Kalamazoo city	Kalamazoo	73,598	74,262	-0.9%

Table: Scott Levin | slevin@mlive.com • Source: US Census • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

(Can't see the database? [Click here.](#))

There's a common Yooper mindset that growth is bad, Fittante said.

"We hear from time to time, 'Oh, we don't want to be like that community' that has some congestion by virtue of their growth," Fittante said.

It's a mentality Fittante and his team are trying to change – as a dwindling population leads to less state and federal resources. Perhaps more consequential, businesses don't want to come or stay if the talent market can't support the jobs, leading to

further decline.

Reasons for optimism

Despite the downward trend, Fittante believes there's never been more opportunity for the U.P.

They're just starting to leverage schools like Northern Michigan University. For example, Northcross Group – a cybersecurity company from Maine – recently established a partnership with NMU to develop a talent pipeline and now has an office in Marquette.

If the U.P. wants to grow, it needs to find a way to keep college students from bolting after graduation, Fittante said.

"I think there's much reason for optimism here," Fittante said.

The work-from-home shift caused by the pandemic is also encouraging, Fittante said. If people can work from anywhere, more people might choose to live in northern Michigan because of the nature and recreational opportunities, he said.

RELATED: If you can work from home, does it matter where home is? Oregon company hires 300 in Michigan

Federal aid intended to build out broadband internet networks and local airports could also help the U.P., Fittante said.

A recent boon in tourism also provides opportunity. Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore had never topped 900,000 annual visitors until 2020, when it had more than 1.2 million visitors. In 2021, the Munising natural attraction is on par for 1.5 million visitors, Fittante said.

COVID-19 has inspired people to visit the U.P. The next step is convincing people it's a worthwhile place to live.

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[Loud pickleball games at center of debate in Upper Peninsula town](#)

[How to explore the U.P.'s Keweenaw Peninsula like star chef Gordon Ramsay](#)

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Michigan Environment Watch

Michigan parks look increasingly likely to get big COVID funding boost



The Little Traverse Wheelway in Petoskey still hasn't been fixed after part of it was destroyed by Lake Michigan erosion last year. City Parks Director Kendall Klingelsmith said he hopes federal stimulus money directed toward parks will help pay to fix it. (Photo courtesy of Kendall Klingelsmith)



October 28, 2021



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Michigan parks look increasingly likely to get big COVID funding boost



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Michigan's long-suffering parks look increasingly likely to get a big funding boost to help fill pothole-laden roads, update ancient bathrooms and revamp outdated campsites.

Republican lawmakers this week introduced three bills that, taken together, would direct \$968 million of Michigan's \$5.8 billion in unspent COVID-19 stimulus dollars to state and local parks.

ADVERTISEMENT

Two of the bills closely align with a parks funding plan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced earlier this year, a signal that the Democratic governor and Republican-led legislature are in general agreement about using some of Michigan's stimulus windfall to spiff up Michigan's [popular but poorly maintained parks](#).

Related:

- [**Michigan parks are popular, but underfunded. They want some COVID money.**](#)
- [**Emergencies surge at northern Michigan parks, lakes. Time for a rescue tax?**](#)
- [**New push to make Michigan's outdoors more inviting to people of color**](#)

Senate Bill 703, sponsored by Ed McBroom, R-Vulcan, would [allocate \\$250 million](#) to drive down a \$264 million maintenance backlog in Michigan's state parks, and would devote \$30 million apiece to the Mackinac State Historic Parks and a new "Northern Michigan tourism and sports fund."

Senate Bill 704, sponsored by Michael MacDonald, R-Macomb, would devote \$150 million for grants to help local parks systems make their own facilities upgrades.

A third bill, sponsored by Sen. John Bumstead, R-Newaygo, would [use \\$508 million](#) to fill the State Park Endowment Fund up to its \$800 million cap. That would create new long-term funding for the parks system, which relies upon disbursements from the endowment to buy new land and cover expenses at the land it already owns.

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But it's unclear whether padding a trust fund is an allowable use of federal COVID stimulus dollars, which states are required to spend by the end of 2026.

Clay Summers, executive director of the Michigan Recreation and Park Association, which represents public parks systems throughout the state, said his organization is seeking more clarity before deciding whether to support the third bill.

Using COVID dollars to create permanent parks funding "certainly makes all the sense in the world from a practical standpoint," Summers said, "... but we're not sure of the legality at this point."

If the endowment fund proposal passes legal muster, McBroom estimated that it could boost the parks system's annual funding by tens of million dollars.

"It's going to allow us to not suffer this backlog on infrastructure in the future," he said.

Spokespeople with Whitmer's office said they "look forward" to working with the legislature to get money out the door.

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"One of our state's greatest strengths is our pristine natural resources," Whitmer spokesperson Bobby Leddy said in an email to Bridge Michigan. "That's why Governor Whitmer and the legislature have put forward very similar proposals to make historic investments in our state and local parks."

The spending proposals build upon recommendations from a 2012 [Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel](#) convened under Republican Gov. Rick Snyder.

The proposed funding would represent a major windfall for the state parks system, whose annual operating budget this year is just \$80 million, along with \$20 million for capital improvement projects.

Taken together, state parks chief Ron Olson said, the funding boosts would be "tremendous" for a system that, while beloved, has long struggled to maintain its assets.

Following decades of worsening conditions at Michigan's 103 state parks, the state in 2010 created an \$11 annual recreation passport visitors can buy to gain year-round access to state parks. That infused the system with new operating cash, helping the system's budget to grow from about \$48 million in fiscal year 2011 to \$80 million this year.

But the added passport revenue has not been enough to make a dent in the maintenance backlog that had ballooned over decades, leaving crumbling roads, outdated facilities and unmaintained trails.

Money to address those issues would come at a crucial moment: Michigan's parks have never been more popular. At state parks alone, [visitation is up](#) 30 percent since the pandemic began.

"It's a legacy-builder," Olson said of the possible funding boost. "This is a way to create that up-to-date atmosphere so people can enjoy themselves in a clean, safe park."

The bills have been referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee, where they await a hearing.

Related Articles:

Coronavirus Tracker | Cases climbing in Michigan, after two weeks of declines

November 1, 2021 | [Bridge Staff](#) in [Michigan Health Watch](#)

November 3, 2021,

MTAC Equine Report

Jenny Cook

COMMON GROUNDS, COMMON BONDS. Everyone who is at this meeting and all the people we represent have the common bond that we know how important our public trails are to us. We value these pathways as shared ownership, community building, recreation, fitness, health, and well-being. We must work together to understand each other's perspectives and encourage each other's user groups. We must also recognize there are user groups that don't work well together due to safety and recreation goals.

While we agree that there should be places for everyone to enjoy their version of recreation, **SAFETY** should not be sacrificed that **ELIMINATES RECREATION** for a certain user group.

We recognize that some people may not be comfortable with horses, so we would like to help educate a few things about horses so horses may be understood and welcomed.

- Horses are prey animals meaning they have very keen situational awareness for survival. They know they are prey animals and that there are many other creatures in this world that are their predators, including humans, who are the ultimate predators.
- A horse can smell, hear, and see movement better than people. Horses also can react $\frac{1}{4}$ second quicker than us. Because of these amazing, unique characteristics, horses will notice and respond (jump, bolt) if they perceive something is coming through the trails near them. A bike moves in the same speed and semi-silent ways as a predator would in motion of an attack. A predatorial pattern could also be to hide or stop abruptly and be silent just before a pounce attack. An elevated heart rate from either fear or exercise is still an elevated heart rate from a potential predator to horses. Horses also know that when a predator is about to attack, they will have an elevated heart rate, so EDUCATION is so important to drive out fears of other trail users. That is also why horse owners appreciate when other user groups STOP and SPEAK so horses can hear from the other trail users and understand that even though they are a predator, and they have elevated heart rates, they are still friendly and not going to attack/hurt them.
- As prey animals, horses prefer to move their feet as their first choice of survival skills, so it is helpful to allow the horseback riders to pass at a walk, while the other user groups remain stopped. Speaking to each other in a normal voice helps horses to remain calm. Say "Hi" when we pass by.

All trail users can be part of the successful "**Safe Passing Plan**" of **STOP, SPEAK, and STAND BACK** with a smile as horseback riders pass at a walk, if we all know what to do and choose to follow the plan. Once the plan is agreed, we can educate and develop a system with yielding safety and etiquette signs.

No user group should lose their trails to another user group.

There should be separate single track, hilly, curvy trails for hikers/ horseback riders/ hunters from biking as shared use on these trails ELIMINATE the RECREATION for horseback riders due to safety concerns previously mentioned.

There should separate biking trails for their optimal recreational use. (Snowmobiles and cross-country skiers have their own trails).

Horseback riders should be welcomed on rail trails after September 15 until April 30 or until the last spring grading, provided there is less than 2 inches of snow. These times and spaces could be shared with bikers if bikers would agree to yield to horseback riders and everyone (including horseback riders) practiced a "Safe Passing Plan" of STOP, SPEAK and STAND BACK with a smile while horseback riders pass at a walk. The rail trails would provide another area where horseback riders could ride during hunting seasons.

Could hikers be OK with sharing trails with horseback riders if we practiced the "Safe Passing Plan"?

Dear Public Managers,

We already have the systems and the people because the people are the system.

We already exist. We are everywhere throughout Michigan. We just need to be welcomed.

By welcoming active user groups and Volunteer Friends' Groups we together are solving multiple community problems. Horse VFG already **donate** around **\$500,000.00 annually** to sustain horse/hiker/hunter trails in Michigan.

1. Volunteer Friends Groups can design, maintain, and sustain trail systems without extra costs from the Department.
2. VFG have the desire because we don't have anywhere else to ride. We need public lands. We need you.
3. VFG have the knowledge, tools, and energy to keep trails maintained and sustained.

Who is going to care more for the community than the community themselves?

We have so many ways to enjoy our Michigan's natural resources. We have abundant public lands in Michigan so that every user group should be allowed public trail access within a 60 miles radius everywhere in Michigan.

Let's demonstrate wise examples of plentiful and organized trail systems for every user group so other states, counties, and townships can follow our Michigan trails plan. Let's be **The BEST Trails State!**



Respectfully submitted,

Jenny Cook

Michigan Equine Trails Representative (MTAC)

SW Michigan Equine Trails Representative (ETS)

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The Need for Safe, Horse Friendly Trails

MICHIGAN HORSE/RIDER with VEHICLE FATAL ACCIDENTS in the last 15 Months 7/2020 – 10/2021

July 2020 Allegan County, **PERSON KILLED:**

<https://wwmt.com/news/local/two-hit-by-car-one-killed-while-riding-horses-in-leighton-township>

December 2020 Wayne County, **ONE PERSON KILLED AND ONE HORSE KILLED:**

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/wayne-county/2020/12/21/man-horse-die-single-vehicle-crash-rural-wayne-county/3992470001/>

January 2021 Branch County, **ONE PERSON KILLED, SIX OTHERS INJURED:**

<https://www.fox17online.com/news/local-news/south-mi/branch/7-hurt-in-buggy-when-horse-hits-pickup-truck-in-branch-county>

April 2021 Muskegon County, **TWO HORSES KILLED WHILE SAVING THE LIVES OF TWO 12-YEAR-OLD GIRLS:**

<https://www.mlive.com/news/muskegon/2021/04/girls-injured-horses-dead-after-car-hits-riders-in-muskegon-county.html>

August 2021 Van Buren County, **ONE PERSON KILLED:**

<https://wkzo.com/2021/08/13/woman-and-her-horse-injured-after-being-struck-by-vehicle-in-van-buren-county/>

October 2021 Branch County, **TWO PEOPLE INJURED, ONE CRITICALLY, TWO HORSES KILLED:**

<https://www.woodtv.com/video/1-critically-injured-2-horses-killed-in-crash-near-coldwater-driver-sought/7078303/>

October 2021 Mecosta County, **ONE PERSON AND HORSE KILLED** by vehicle:

<https://bigrapidsdailynews.com/breaking-news/491762>

Multiple acres of land are needed to exercise horses, but these large parcels of land are often too expensive and not always available.

As communities grow, there is less land available to safely exercise horses.

When bikers use equestrian trails, that eliminates the recreation for equestrians and makes the equestrian trails very dangerous.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

Welcome and establish separate slow trails: horse/hiking/hunting trails and faster trails: biking/hiking trails on hilly, curvy trails.

Identify areas suitable for trail rider access where none is now available with a goal of trail access within 60 miles of travel for all user groups.

Our trails would be safer with education through yielding signage and public safety announcements. All user groups (including horseback riders) should yield to each other and speak (Say “Hi” when you pass by) when we encounter each other.

SEPARATE Some trails uses are better when separate to assure each users safety and sustained trail access.

STOP Please do not hide as this may cause the horses to fear they will be attacked.

SPEAK Please say “Hi” when you pass by to the horseback riders. This helps horses to identify you as a person and will help keep horses calm.

STAND BACK with your whole group on the same side of the trail. Please contain children and dogs.

SAFE PASSING PRACTICES: Since horses prefer to move their feet as natural survival skills, it is best when horseback riders pass at a walk while the other trail users remain stopped.

Smile and enjoy the ride/hike!



Jenny Cook
Michigan Equine Trails Representative (MTAC)
SW Michigan Equine Trails Representative (ETS)
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Great Lakes Equestrian Shoreline Ride: A Great Partnership

For the past four years, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has been working hand and hand with the **Equine Trails Subcommittee** to explore opportunities for shoreline horseback riding along Michigan's Great Lakes. In the past, pilot rides have been hosted at Muskegon and Silver Lake state parks.

In 2021, we partnered with the Michigan Horse Council to host a 2-week event as part of a pilot program to simulate what a riding season would look like at Silver Lake State Park.

This mutually beneficial partnership is providing an opportunity for more than 800 equestrians to ride the Lake Michigan shoreline, connect with MHC and DNR and explore a new region of Michigan on horseback.

Sign up for text notifications!

- Register for the event: Text "BeachRide" to 80888.
- Volunteer: Text "Rider" to 80888.
- Info on future shoreline rides? Text "Trot" to 80888.



www.Michigan.gov/Equestrian • 989-313-0000

The Recreation Passport is the easiest way for residents to explore, support and protect state parks, trails and waterways for the next generation. Check "YES" for the Recreation Passport when it's time to renew your Michigan vehicle registration or purchase one at a state park. Check here. Park here. Learn more at michigan.gov/recreationpassport.



A Warm Invitation

There has been some very nice publicity for the Michigan Great Lakes Shoreline Horseback Rides. We are so thankful for the partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Horse Council to open this area to horseback riders. The welcoming hospitality of the local communities has been outstanding.

<https://www.wzzm13.com/article/news/dnr-offering-horseback-riders-unique-opportunity-to-access-dunes-lake-michigan-shoreline/69-01f7dda7-d49e-419a-b67c-9371ce9bafc4>

<http://www.oceanacountypress.com/2021/10/12/pilot-program-offers-horseback-riding-at-silver-lake/>

<https://freshwater-reporter.com/pilot-season-to-begin-for-shoreline-horseback-riding/>

<https://elcr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FALL-2021-Newsletter-Electronic.pdf>

There also has been Facebook posts on the tourism page "Think Dunes" about the shoreline rides and a post on their website.

<https://thinkdunes.com/event/silver-lake-state-park-shoreline-horseback-riding-season/>

**** Please consider this notice as an **INVITATION** for all MTAC Members and all Public Managers to be welcomed to an introductory Horse Meet and Greet in the Silver Lake State Park ORV Parking Lot November 1-14, 2021, any day from 10:00a.m. 5:00p.m. (Horse rides will not be provided at this location and season. Horse rides could be available another time with further arrangements.) ****

Contact Jenny Cook, Michigan Equine Trails Representative mi.trail.rep@gmail.com (269)998-5916 to RSVP.



ORVAW Fall 2021 Report

Jessi Adler

The ORVAW committee met on October 27. The group welcomed a new board member effective this meeting. His name is Jarrod Biebel, and he represents the Autrain / E. Upper Peninsula.

Other business taken up during the meeting:

- Formed a storm damage subcommittee that will be meeting next on 12-7-21 to discuss how best to repair and be reimbursed for storm damage to the trails.
- Took a vote on how the ORVAW feels about [HB 4535](#) (legislation for the prohibition for wheeled vehicles from driving on snowmobile trails between December 1 to April 1.)
 - The vote to support the bill as written was 1-Yea and 6 Nay.
 - Next steps are to reach out to bill sponsor State Rep Ken Borton and craft a letter with our recommendations.
 - The board is meeting on 11-3-21 to discuss how to craft the letter
- Discussed the recent \$1.15MM award to MISORVA and how these funds will be distributed.
 - Karen Middendorp attended and shared that this is a work in progress, but the funds will be split evenly between the snowmobile and ORV groups for trail maintenance equipment.
 - A board is being established to manage the process and distribution.
- Discussed trail safety and safety courses and asked to add in some verbiage specific to Silver Lake for dunes. Curt Brower is following up with Michael Hearn regarding shifting sand and sand drifts. A 13-year-old was recently killed at Silver Lake from an accident exactly like this.

Report submitted by Jessi Adler and Curt Brower

SAW Report

November 2021 (MTAC Meeting)

Submitted by Don Britton

This is my report for the MISORVA annual meeting from SAW with their recommendations and discussions.

Recommend all groomer sponsors attend a preseason meeting, October 26 or 28, 2021. from

The Michigan Tech study on groomer maintenance is ongoing.

The equipment sub-committee will recommend to SAW specifications for all new groomers. (too many bells and whistles.)

Snow country conservancy is still funding trail easements and acquisitions for permanent trails.

SAW asked for an update on 2020 funding held back during covid Their answer was , it is at the state budget office waiting to go to legislature.

RIDE RIGHT place mats will be available from the DNR.

SAW made a motion that the snowmobile program trail improvement fund pay for up to two members per grant sponsor to attend the groomer workshop.